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SUBJECT: GRENADA REPLACES CONTROVERSIAL AG IN CABINET SHUFFLE

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Grenada's year-old Government announced a cabinet reshuffle on 31 July, the centerpiece of which was the formal sacking of a controversial Attorney General. The reshuffle also resulted in the creation of two new ministries and the division of several others. According to the Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister, these changes were put into place to "provide for better management" and "to allow ministers to make more effective contributions" to the GOG. By local accounts, this move was a positive one, showing both maturity by the senior leadership in removing the problematic AG, and a fulfillment of the government's promise to run a clean ship. Bios for all new ministers at end of cable. End summary.

AG Scandal Leads to Changes

¶2. (SBU) The centerpiece of the government's cabinet shuffle announced 31 July was the removal of much-maligned AG Jimmy Bristol at the express request of Prime Minister Tillman Thomas. Bristol shamelessly abused his position in an attempt to influence the outcome of his stepson's criminal trial in the U.S. According to the GOG Press Secretary, Bristol wrote to a U.S. judge in November 2008 on official GOG letterhead, seeking leniency for his stepson, Emmanuel Ganpot, who had been a fugitive in the U.S. for six years. Ganpot is scheduled to be sentenced in late August 2009 on drug-related charges. The new AG is Rohan Phillip, a 38 year old former Solicitor General. Phillip confirmed during our conversation on 21 August that he has been appointed for a three-month period, but that this appointment could, and probably would, be extended.

The Foreign Affairs - Tourism Division

¶3. (SBU) Aside from the AG sacking, the most significant move was the division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism, formerly one ministry. The split was spurred by growing discontent among major stakeholders, such as the Hotel Association, that FONMIN Peter David was ignoring the tourism portfolio and focusing a bit too heavily on off-island jaunts [Note: mostly to Cuba. End note.] To ameliorate this problem, the GOG created a new, independent Ministry of Tourism and appointed Glynis Roberts, former Minister for Social Development, Labor and Ecclesiastical Affairs, to the post. Peter David retained the foreign affairs portfolio. Roberts previously held the position of Grenadian representative to the EU, a connection some believe will assist her in increasing tourism from Europe.

Other Appointments

¶4. (SBU) Senator Ann Peters, a former nurse and hospital administrator who also served as spokesperson for Grenada's medical practitioners for many years, is now the Minister for Health,

replacing Karl Hood, who was moved to Minister for Social Development, Labor and Ecclesiastical Affairs - a posting more in keeping with his background as a high-ranking minister in the Pentecostal church. In addition, the ministry was re-christened as the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Ecclesiastical Affairs, with the Social Development portfolio moving to its own separate ministry.

¶5. (SBU) In another, probably less beneficial, move, the Ministry of the Environment, Foreign Trade and Export Development replaces the former Ministry of the Environment. This new ministry is led by Michael Church, the former Junior Minister for Finance and Foreign Trade. Prior to 31 July there was one consolidated Ministry for Finance, Planning Economy, Energy, and Foreign Trade and Cooperatives, with various junior ministers running the individual portfolios. The PM's advisor tells us that it was done in order to leave the former Junior Minister for the Environment, Sylvester Quarless, free to focus on Social Development in his new role as Minister for Social Development, but the move relegates environmental issues to what appears to be a fairly bloated ministry.

¶6. (SBU) The leadership of the Ministries of Finance and Education - widely considered to be the most successful and well-functioning of the group - remains unchanged. Franka Bernardine remains the Education Minister and is best known to date for the Ministry of Education's fulfillment of an election promise to provide free school books to all students, which they did within four months of taking office. Bernardine is also the former director of the U.S. Peace Corps office in Grenada, at which time she had appealed on several occasions to the Ministry of Education to set up a desk focusing solely on Special Ed, but was ignored. Immediately upon

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becoming Education Minister she created this dedicated desk, run by a Coordinator for Special Ed. Finance Minister and Deputy Party Leader Nazim Burke also retained his position. The highlight of his tenure thus far is the popular "tax amnesty" which brought in significant, much-needed revenue.

COMMENT

¶7. (SBU) The recent changes in the GOG led local observers to note that after a year in office, the NDC government seems to finally be settling down and getting their act together to run the country. It is a general belief that this reshuffle is a positive change. The majority of the public supported the PM's decision to sack Bristol, viewing this move as proof of his promise to run a more transparent government.

BIODATA FOR NEW MINISTERS

¶8. (SBU) Biodata follows:

--Rohan Phillip, Attorney General: Phillip was born on the tiny island of Carriacou and received his LL.B (Hons) in 1996. He was admitted to the Grenada Bar in 1998 and worked as Crown Counsel in the AG's Chambers until 2000. He then moved to Belize where he served as Crown Counsel for the Director of Public Prosecution, then in the Solicitor General's office. In 2003 Phillip returned to Grenada as Crown Counsel for the firm Henry, Hudson-Phillips & Company. From 2005 to 2007 he was a Legal Officer at the OECS, working closely with the Economic Union Task Force, OECS Family Law & Domestic Violence Reform Project and ECTEL Board of Directors. He went into private practice in 2007, until he was appointed Solicitor General in October 2008. He was named Attorney General on 28 July 2009.

--Senator Ann Peters, Minister for Health: Peters served two terms in the Senate after being appointed by the former NDC Government of PM Sir Nicholas Brathwaite. She is a trained nurse and former President of the Grenada Nurses Association. She is also the wife of popular Grenadian playwright, Francis Urias Peters, and is herself an icon in the performing arts. She is a singer and dancer and served as choreographer for the National Performing Arts Company

of Grenada from 1979 to 1983.

--Michael Church, Minister for the Environment, Foreign Trade and Export Development: Church is an educator and development consultant who attended the Grenada Teachers' College, the University of Havana, the University of Camaguey, North Carolina State College and the University of Manitoba. His studies focused on education and agricultural economics. He has worked as Chief Technical Officer in the Ministry of Agriculture and as a lecturer at the T.A. Marryshow Community College in Grenada.

-- Sylvester Quarless, Minister for Social Development: Quarless is a successful businessman who studied at the University of the West Indies and also in Germany. He majored in journalism, public relations and public administration. He then worked as Information Officer for the Government of Grenada for 28 years.

End of biodata.

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